Costa: This Legislation Will Provide Health Care Coverage For 11 Million Children

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Today, Congressman Jim Costa (D-Fresno) supported HR 2, the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) Reauthorization bill which was passed by the House of Representatives by a vote of 289 to 139. It now heads to the United States Senate for consideration. This bill renews and improves SCHIP, and is estimated to provide health care coverage for 11 million children. In Fiscal Year 2007, there were approximately 1,538,416 California children covered under SCHIP.

"Our children are the most vulnerable people in our nation, and passage of this bill is the first step in ensuring they can receive proper health care," said Costa. "Valley hospitals and clinics struggle to treat the uninsured and underinsured in their communities, and passage of SCHIP will appropriately fund a program that has helped to reduce the percentage of uninsured children in California from 21% to 14%."

The bill passed by the House today renews and improves SCHIP, and reauthorizes it for four and a half years – through Fiscal Year 2013. Once signed into law, it will ensure that the 7 million children who currently participate in SCHIP continue to receive coverage, and extends coverage to 4 million more uninsured children, according to the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office. This legislation is fully paid for with an increase in the tobacco tax and closes a loophole in Medicare that allows physicians to profit from referring their patients to hospitals in which they have an ownership interest.

"Taxpayers are already paying for the health care of the uninsured in the most expensive way possible: through emergency room care. Every dollar spent on the SCHIP program helps to reduce the burden of uncompensated care born by our hospitals and health clinics by allowing uninsured children to seek early care for an illness. This is a more efficient expenditure of taxpayer dollars and a more effective way to provide healthcare," concluded Costa.